

# RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF EARLY RABBINIC PRONOUNCEMENT STORIES

*by*

ALAN J. AVERY-PECK

*Tulane University*

Advocates of rhetorical criticism recently have argued that, within broad historical and geographical limits, rhetorical art remains the same from literature to literature. While “colored by the traditions and conventions of the society in which it is applied,” rhetoric, this is to say, “is also a universal phenomenon which is conditioned by the basic workings of the human mind and heart and by the nature of all human society.”<sup>1</sup>

One important implication of this theory of rhetoric is that similar literary forms will have the same rhetorical force and meaning in all cultures in which they occur. If the rhetorical medium indeed determines the message, then patterned language should function similarly regardless of its historical, cultural, or documentary provenance. Lists, epistle forms, or apophthegmata, for instance, will function similarly and have the same rhetorical force in literatures deriving from diverse cultures and historical periods. For the form’s meaning, the recent theory of rhetorical analysis holds, is determined as much by the universal “workings of the human mind and heart” as by the unique conventions and ideals of the culture in which it is used.

The following analysis tests this theory of rhetoric by taking up the example of the pronouncement story. This easily identifiable literary form occurs twenty-four times in the early Rabbinic literature and appears widely in the Gospels and in other Hellenistic literatures. The form consists of “a brief narrative in which the climactic (and often final) element is a pronouncement which is presented as a particular person’s response to something said or observed on a particular occasion in the past” (Tannehill, 1981, p. 1). In this form, all rhetorical movement is towards the concluding memorable comment or maxim, which dominates the pronouncement story as a whole. This suggests that a basic function of the pronouncement story is to highlight the

1. Kennedy (1984, p. 10). In the pages that follow, Kennedy provides an overview of classical rhetorical theory and of the universal factors found in any rhetorical situation.

unique personality of the individual who makes that statement. These stories display that individual as a model to be imitated or, at times, to be shunned.

The question in the following is whether or not the pronouncement stories that appear in the early Rabbinic literature indeed have the same rhetorical force and function as the examples of this form that occur in other Hellenistic writings. To answer this question, I apply to the early Rabbinic pronouncement stories the rhetorical typology developed by Vernon Robbins (1983) in his analysis of pronouncement stories found in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* and throughout the Hellenistic literature. Attentive to the literary features regularly found in such stories, Robbins' taxonomy catalogs the range of rhetorical purposes to which this literary form is employed. The issue here is whether or not the meaning of the Rabbinic stories is illuminated through the application of this same rhetorical typology. What we wish to know, essentially, is whether or not the Rabbinic pronouncement stories in fact function similarly to their Hellenistic parallels.

The analysis that follows indicates that, true to the theory of rhetorical analysis introduced above, Robbins' typology accounts equally for the use and meaning of pronouncement stories in Plutarch, the Gospels, and within the Rabbinic literature. Based upon this fact, this study concludes that modes of rhetorical analysis developed in the evaluation of Hellenistic literatures comprise an important tool for understanding the Rabbinic literature. That literature is to be seen very much as a product of the Hellenistic environment in which it was created.

Insofar as the Rabbinic literature was nurtured and developed in the Hellenistic cultural context, this result is not entirely surprising. Yet we must be clear that, in drawing conclusions concerning the relationship between Rabbinic and other Hellenistic pronouncement stories, this study's conclusions in part reverse results reached in previous evaluations of this same literary form. I refer specifically to the assessment of early Rabbinic pronouncement stories initiated by Porton (1981, pp. 81–99) and developed by the present author (Avery-Peck, 1983, pp. 223–244). Based upon a preliminary taxonomic classification of the Rabbinic pericopae and an evaluation of their structure and substantive interests, my previous study concluded that the Rabbinic pericopae function quite differently from outwardly similar stories found in the Gospels and Hellenistic literature.<sup>2</sup>

2. My study thus upheld the conclusion reached by Porton (1981). Porton identified all of the extant Tannaitic pronouncement stories and, on that basis, criticized Rudolph Bultmann's theory of the relationship between the rabbinic literature and the Gospel's *apophthegmata*. Porton (1981, p. 96) found that "the relevant Jewish texts do not provide a large number of good parallels to the selections from the Christian Bible which Bultmann analyzed."

The example of the Rabbinic pronouncement stories thus seemed to provide a counter example to the theory that underlies so much of rhetorical analysis. It suggested that a literary form found extensively in Hellenistic literature does not have the same rhetorical force when found in contemporaneous Rabbinic passages. What now is clear is that those previous conclusions resulted from an incomplete, and therefore misleading, rhetorical analysis of pronouncement stories in general. Let me explain.

The basis for my first study was an initial taxonomy developed by Vernon Robbins (1981) in his work on Plutarch's *Lives*. This classificatory scheme was attentive to a single rhetorical phenomenon in each story. As a result, a story marked on the surface by one salient formal or substantive feature, but which had a different underlying rhetorical force, did not conform to the paradigmatic traits of the category in which it was placed. In my previous article I therefore consistently observed that, while superficially similar to Hellenistic pronouncement stories, the Rabbinic materials did not evince the meanings that, according to Robbins, the pronouncement form typically produced. In particular, the Rabbinic materials neither focused upon their final statement nor highlighted the personality of the individual who made that statement or about whom it was said. These rhetorical traits comprised the central features of the pronouncement stories upon which the typology was based.

Additional work by Robbins, however, has shown that his original typology did not accurately define the range of rhetorical purposes a pronouncement story can serve. As a result of its attention to only a single rhetorical feature, the original typology offered an incomplete understanding of the rhetorical force of the stories in Plutarch's *Lives* and elsewhere. The problem at base was Robbins' failure to distinguish the pronouncement story form's internal rhetorical character from the meaning and function that form took on in its larger redactional setting. Robbins' original taxonomy simply failed to recognize that a story which, viewed independently, has one particular meaning may, when seen in its larger literary context, have a very different meaning and function.

To better explain the rhetorical force of the pronouncement story, in a later study Robbins (1985) suggested a classificatory scheme attentive to the several rhetorical features regularly found in single stories. The new taxonomy accordingly cataloged the range of purposes to which a single literary pericope could be employed. It did this by treating independently the internal rhetorical character of a pronouncement story and the way in which an author or redactor used the story in its larger literary setting.

Robbins' expanded taxonomy accounts for the distinctive functions of the pronouncement story form when it appears within literatures marked

by diverse substantive traits. As a result, in the present study, use of Robbins' new classificatory scheme does in fact direct our attention to the salient features of the Rabbinic pronouncement stories and, indeed, to the literary and substantive characteristics of the early Rabbinic literature as a whole.<sup>3</sup> A properly designed rhetorical analysis, this suggests, should shed light both upon the art of rhetoric in general and on the distinctive characteristics of the particular literature under examination.

In all, then, this examination illustrates the extent to which rhetorical form and content determine meanings that are consistent across diverse literatures. The stumbling block to fruitfully employing rhetorical criticism, we find, is in correctly identifying the significant rhetorical dimensions of the literary form under consideration. For, as the example of the Rabbinic pronouncement stories illustrates, application of distinct rhetorical taxonomies results in quite different understandings of the literatures being assessed.

### THE EARLY RABBINIC PRONOUNCEMENT STORIES

In the following, the twenty-four extant early Rabbinic pronouncement stories<sup>4</sup> are arranged and discussed according to the classificatory scheme recently developed by Robbins. This taxonomy consists of six categories: 1) display stories, 2) thesis stories, 3) exhortation stories, 4) defense stories, 5) praise stories, and 6) censure stories. These headings "reflect the rhetoricians' basic use of the stories" (Robbins, 1985, p. 4), for instance, to display an individual's personality (no. 1), to present a thesis about thought or action (no. 2), or to provide a rationale defending a particular form of thought or action (no. 4).

Within these basic types, a range of variation exists, the result of the particular topical setting in which the pronouncement story is placed. The point

3. In this regard, the present analysis upholds the results of the previous studies. Rhetorically, Rabbinic pronouncement stories function similarly to pronouncement stories in other Hellenistic literatures. At the same time, the types of pronouncement stories that occur in the Rabbinic literature and their particular substantive interests clearly distinguish the Rabbinic literature as a whole from the other writings in which pronouncement stories appear.

4. To identify these stories, Porton (1981) only examined documents that belong to the earliest stratum of the rabbinic literature. Since the evidence indicates that later editors created or, at least, reformulated materials that concerned early figures, it would be misleading to employ late pericopae in order to draw conclusions about the use of a literary convention in Tannaitic times. Studies that evaluate early and late rabbinic stories attributed to or about specific rabbinic figures make this explicit. See, e.g., Neusner and Avery-Peck (1982a and 1982b); Porton's study of the Tannaitic master Ishmael (1976-1982); and Neusner's study of Yohanan b. Zakkai (1970).

of the story may be reached, for example, through the asking of a question (interrogative setting) or through description of an action (action setting). Awareness of these corollary rhetorical features allows us to delineate how each pronouncement story functions within its own literary context.

## I. DISPLAY STORIES

By definition, pronouncement stories exhibit an aspect of a person's character or personality. Accordingly, all pronouncement stories display epideictic rhetoric. Display stories are the most basic type of pronouncement stories, for their *sole* purpose is to display the actor's or speaker's role, character, or reputation. The fact that no such stories appear in the early Rabbinic literature follows from the general tendency of that literature to "conceal distinctive elements of personality, character, and intellect" (Green, 1978, p. 81). This difference between the early Rabbinic literature and the Hellenistic literatures in which pronouncement stories abound will be an important datum for this study's conclusions concerning the use of the pronouncement story form in the early Rabbinic literature.

## II. THESIS STORIES

In thesis stories the display of the individual's attributes introduces a thesis of either a deliberative (section A), juridical (section B), or epideictic (section C) nature. The thesis is "designed to engage the reader in reflection, interaction and decision" (Robbins, 1985, p. 4). The thesis describes a truth concerning the nature of the world or proper action and does not simply portray an individual's personality. These stories do not focus *primarily* upon personality, such that it is not surprising to find a few of them in the early Rabbinic literature.

### A. *Deliberative Thesis*

Here the pronouncement defines thought or action in a reflective, deliberative mode (Robbins, 1985, p. 7). In the example before us, it indicates what thoughts are most beneficial to accept.

Sifre Deuteronomy 322 (Declarative Setting)

One time [when] there was a war in Judea, a commander of horsemen ran after an Israelite on a horse in order to kill him, but he did not reach him. Before he reached him, a snake bit [the commander] on the heel. [The Israelite] said to him: "Because we are strong, you are delivered into our hands. *Were it not that their rock had sold them*" (Deut 32:34).

The story is deliberative because, while the Israelite responds to the situation he has just encountered, his utterance does not concern that particular incident alone. Rather, primarily of his own initiative, he states a thesis concerning the predicament of the Israelite people. His point is ironic. Contrary to what is apparent from the events of the day, the Israelites are stronger than the Romans. The Israelites' defeat is explained by the fact that they had angered God (Porton, 1981, p. 93). Deut 32:34, cited at the end of the story, proves this. The setting is declarative, for the primary actor does not attempt to correct others, but simply to define proper understanding for the future.

### B. *Juridical Thesis*

In these stories, a final statement of law expresses the underlying thesis.

Sifre Deuteronomy 80 (Declarative Setting)

One time R. Judah b. Bethyra, R. Mattyah b. Harash, R. Hananyah b. Ahai, R. Joshua and R. Yonatan were leaving the land [of Israel]. When they reached Palton, they recalled the land and they stood erect while their eyes shed tears. They rent their garments and recited this verse: "[*You shall indeed cross the Jordan to enter and to make the land your own that the Lord your God is giving you.*] *You shall possess it and shall live in it and you must keep and observe all the laws . . .*" (Deut 11:31). They said: "Living in the land is equal to observing all of the [other] commandments [stated] in the Torah."

The rabbis' final comment captures the significance of the situation, their leaving the land of Israel. That comment, however, is not prompted specifically by that event or by any other players in the story. Rather, it depends upon the verse of Scripture cited directly before it. The authorities treat the verse "*You shall live in the land and you shall keep and observe all the laws*" to mean "*By living in the land you will be keeping all of the commandments.*" Since the story dictates proper understanding, but does not concern presently wrong behavior, its setting is declarative.

Mishnah *Berakhot* 1:1 (Corrective Setting)

One time [Gamaliel]'s sons returned [after midnight] from a wedding feast. They said to him: "We have not yet recited the *Shema*." He said to them: "If the morning star has not yet risen, you [still] are obligated to recite [it]!"

Gamaliel corrects his sons' wrong assumption that, because it is after midnight, they have lost the opportunity to recite the *Shema*-prayer, required every evening. Hence this is a juridical thesis story with a corrective setting. Within its larger context in Mishnah *Berakhot* 1:1, Gamaliel's final utterance serves to buttress the editor's point that all religious

obligations to which one is subject “until midnight” may, in fact, be performed throughout the night.

### C. *Epidictic Thesis*

Epidictic thesis stories introduce a thesis concerning human character in general. The two stories before us answer the questions 1) who is hated in the world, and 2) what is the difference between wise individuals and understanding ones. In these particular cases, the thesis, further, is used to express an underlying polemic, that rabbis are superior to pagan philosophers. Noting that the setting in these stories has a corrective element allows us to focus upon the polemical rhetoric.

#### Tosefta *Shebuot* 3:6 (Interrogative/Corrective Setting)

One time R. Reuben spent the Sabbath in Tiberias, and one philosopher found him. He said to him: “Which is the one who is hated in the world?” [Reuben] said to him: “The one who denies his Creator.” [The philosopher] said to him: “How [does he deny Him]?” [Reuben] said to him: “*Honor your father and your mother. Do not murder. Do not bear false witness against your neighbor. Do not covet.* Behold, a man does not deny a thing until he denies [its] essential part. And a man commits a sin only after he has denied [the existence of] the one who commanded concerning it.”

Reuben interacts with an idea (who is hated, how does he come to be hated, what is correct behavior?) rather than with the other person. In this respect the rhetoric here is deliberative. A second point of the story, however, is inherent in the statement of the setting, which has a pagan philosopher question a rabbi. The point is that philosophers respect rabbis, politely asking them questions and accepting their answers. While the form of the epidictic thesis leads us to expect a story primarily about human character (which the pronouncement here does present), the interrogative/corrective setting allows the story also to highlight the stature of rabbis within the world of philosophers.

#### Sifre Deuteronomy 13 (Interrogative/Corrective Setting)

*Choose wise, understanding [and experienced] men* (Deut 1:13). This is the question Arios asked R. Yose: [Arios] said to him: “Which is a wise man?” [Yose] said to him: “He who practices that which he teaches. Or perhaps [such a person] is [referred to] rather [as] an understanding man?” [Arios] said to him: “*Understanding men* is already said [in the above verse]. What is the difference between a wise man and an understanding man?” [Yose said to him:] “A wise man is similar to a rich [gold] smith. When [others] bring him [gold] to examine [lit.: see], he examines [it]. When [others] do not bring him [gold] to examine, he takes out his own [gold] and examines

[it]. An understanding man is similar to a poor [gold] smith. When [others] bring him [gold] to examine, he examines [it]. When [others] do not bring him [gold] to examine, he must sit and be idle."

As in the preceding unit, the rabbi responds to two inquiries<sup>5</sup> concerning personal character. The answers to both consist of a memorable remark. A wise person practices what he preaches. He differs from an understanding person in that he alone puts his knowledge to action in his own life. This story, like the previous one, contains an underlying polemic, made possible by the interrogative/corrective setting. Yose points out that rabbis (rich men), who carry out their knowledge in all aspects of everyday life, are superior to pagan philosophers (poor men), who teach but have no overall theory of proper day-to-day behavior, such as is represented by Rabbinic law.

### III. EXHORTATION STORIES

Exhortation stories "invest the character of the person in a thesis by having him adopt [an] imperative mode of speech." As a result, "the main character confronts another with a personal challenge" (Robbins, 1985, p. 11). The absence of these stories in the early Rabbinic literature is a function of that literature's preference for legal rhetoric, on the one hand, and its suppression of aspects of personal character, on the other. A Rabbinic thesis (law) is argued through Scriptural exegesis or some other form of legal proof. The challenge therefore need never be "personal" nor presented through an imperative mode of speech.<sup>6</sup> As already pointed out for the case of display stories, we see that the sort of pronouncement stories found in, or absent from, the Rabbinic literature follows from the distinctive substantive and literary characteristics of this literature.

### IV. DEFENSE STORIES

In these stories the main character produces a rationale that defends some action or idea. The defense may be either deliberative, juridical, or epideictic. The latter two types occur in the Rabbinic literature.

5. These units thus contain short dialogues, indicating "that a number of points are being made about the topic" and suggesting that the pericopae are not necessarily pronouncement stories at all (Tannehill, 1981, p. 2). Since in these entries the final utterances clearly dominate, I agree with Porton that they should be deemed pronouncement stories.

6. The closest the Rabbinic literature comes to this form is the simple declarative sentence through which many laws are stated. A statement such as "Rabbi X says, 'They do such and so'" is not only a description of the correct law but also an exhortation to another to adopt that particular behavior. Since these statements do not comprise a "personal" challenge, are not phrased in the imperative, and lack the setting that defines the pronouncement story, they are not, however, appropriately listed here.



## I. Juridical Defense

“These stories feature the defense of an action which has been performed or is being performed, and there is either a request to produce a legal rationale or there is an accusation that the action was illegal” (Robbins, 1985, p. 16).

### Sifre Deuteronomy 38 (Interrogative Setting)

One time R. Eliezer and R. Zadoq were reclining at a feast for the son of Rabban Gamaliel. Rabban Gamaliel mixed a glass [of wine] for R. Eliezer, but he did not wish to accept it. R. Joshua accepted it. R. Eliezer said to him: “What is this, Joshua? Is it right that we should recline and Gamaliel be Rabbi should stand and serve us?” R. Joshua said to him: “Leave him alone that he might serve [us]. Abraham, the greatest one of the world, served the ministering angels, even though he thought that they were Arab idolaters, for it is said, *And he lifted his eyes and looked and behold three men stood in front of him* (Gen 18:2). And is it not an *a fortiori* [argument]? Now if Abraham, the greatest one of the world, served the ministering angels, and he thought that they were Arab idolaters, should not Gamaliel be-Rabbi serve us?”

At issue is a matter of law, whether or not a great rabbi should be allowed to serve an equal, or lesser, master. By pointing out that even Abraham served others, Joshua provides a rationale for his and Gamaliel’s actions. Note the similarity of this story to common exegetical pericopae in which an *a fortiori* argument based on a passage from Scripture serves to describe permitted or forbidden behavior. The difference here is the inclusion of the setting.

### Tosefta Pisha 4:13 (Interrogation and Accusation)

- A. One time the 14th [of Nissan] fell on the Sabbath. They asked Hillel the Elder: “Does the Passover offering override the Sabbath?” He said to them: “And do we have only one Passover offering in the year which overrides the Sabbath? We have more than 300 Passover offerings in the year, and they [all] override the Sabbath.”
- B. The whole courtyard collected against him. He said to them: “The continual offering is a community sacrifice and the Passover offering is a community sacrifice. Just as the continual offering, which is a community sacrifice, overrides the Sabbath, so the Passover offering, which is a community offering, overrides the Sabbath.
- C. “Another matter: It is said concerning the continual offering ‘its season’ (Num 28:2), and ‘its season’ (Num 9:2) is said concerning the Passover offering. Just as the continual offering—concerning which ‘its season’ is said—overrides the Sabbath, so the Passover offering—concerning which ‘its season’ is said—overrides the Sabbath.

- D. "And furthermore [it is an] *a fortiori* [argument]. Since the continual offering, which does not produce liability to extirpation, overrides the Sabbath, the Passover offering, which does produce liability to extirpation—how much the more should it override the Sabbath!
- E. "And further, I have received from my masters [the tradition] that the Passover offering overrides the Sabbath, and not [merely] the first Passover offering [overrides the Sabbath], but [also] the Passover offering of the individual [overrides the Sabbath]."
- F. They said to him: "What will be the rule for the people who do not bring knives and Passover offerings to the Sanctuary [before the Sabbath, so as to prevent themselves from needing to do forbidden labor on the Sabbath itself]?" He said to them: "Leave them alone. The holy spirit is upon them. If they are not prophets, they are the disciples of prophets."

Hillel's long opening statement (A–E), which explains how we know that the Passover offering overrides the Sabbath, comprises the setting. The final utterance is the rationale Hillel provides in response to the problem phrased by the accusers, F. They propose that, because Hillel's ruling potentially will lead to transgressions, it is unacceptable. Hillel responds that these people do not correctly understand the situation. Subject to the holy spirit, the people naturally will do the correct thing.

While, as we see, this incident contains the two elements of a pronouncement story, it differs formally from other pronouncement stories identified in the Rabbinic and Hellenistic literatures.<sup>7</sup> This story contains several independent units. A, B, and F comprise individual pronouncement stories,<sup>8</sup> each consisting of a challenge and memorable retort. C and D are independent Scriptural exegeses. While not the pericope's conclusion, E, finally, contains one central point of the story. Hillel's opinion is accepted when he announces that he transmits the teaching of his masters, not his own legal reasoning. The story thus highlights the significance of the chain of tradition through which law is passed on. It denigrates the ability of any individual—even Hillel—to decide the law on his own.

Hillel's initial victory, E, introduces the story's conclusion, F, in which Hillel staves off the final "accusation" and neutralizes his opponents' opposition to his view. Hillel's statement at F strikingly parallels his claim at E, strengthening the rhetorical force of the story as a whole. At

7. Most obviously the long exegetical introduction to this pericope distinguishes it from the usual pronouncement story, with its short statement of context or setting.

8. In each of these units the question provides the context, and Hillel's response comprises the final utterance that characterizes this literary type.

F, as at E, Hillel refuses to offer an objective reason for his view. In both cases, rather, he maintains that he is correct simply in the nature of things. His views are authoritative because they follow past teachers (E) and because God will assure that the law is properly observed (F). Such ideas are unusual within the early Rabbinic literature and are powerfully expressed here using the pronouncement story form.

## II. *Epideictic Defense*

The focus of these stories is not only the law but also the character and reputation of the individual who performed the questioned action. The defense therefore consists of a rationale that exonerates the individual accused of misconduct (Robbins, 1985, p. 19). These stories may concern either self-defense, in which the main character defends himself, or defense of others, in which that character responds to criticism of a third party. The early Rabbinic literature contains five examples of the former type, one of the latter.

### A. *Self-Defense*

#### Mishnah *Berakhot* 2:5 (Corrective Setting)

There was an incident concerning Rabban Gamaliel, who recited the *Shema* on the night of his wedding. His students said to him: "Did you not teach us, our Rabbi, that the groom is exempt from reciting the *Shema* on the night of his marriage?" He said to them, "I will not listen to you so that I would remove the kingdom of Heaven from me for even one hour!"

The students object to Gamaliel's actions, claiming that he contradicts his own teaching. He defends himself by stating that, just as there are reasons for each and every law, so there are reasons for rejecting a particular rule. This same theme is carried forward in the next two entries, which comprise the continuation of the text of Mishnah *Berakhot*.

#### Mishnah *Berakhot* 2:6 (Corrective Setting)

[Gamaliel] washed on the first night after his wife had died. His students said to him: "Did you not teach us, our Rabbi, that a mourner is forbidden to wash? He said to them: "I am not like other men, for I am of feeble health."

The form is the same as in the preceding story. Gamaliel now defends himself by claiming that he is special and not subject to the usual rule. As in the preceding example, and true to epideictic rhetoric, the story reveals an aspect of Gamaliel's character. He was extremely pious yet not to a fault. The following story develops this theme.

*Mishnah Berakhot 2:7 (Corrective Setting)*

And when Tabi, his slave, died, [Gamaliel] received consolation because of him. His students said to him: "Did you not teach us, our Rabbi, that one does not receive consolation on account of slaves?" He said to them: "Tabi was not like other slaves: He was ritually fit."

Gamaliel again follows the presumed intent of the law, though not its letter. This is the aspect of his personality pointed out by this tripartite redactional unit as a whole. The concluding praise of Tabi serves as Gamaliel's defense of his own actions and accounts for placement of this unit under the present heading.

*Sifra 45c (Corrective Setting)*

It once happened that one of the students was rendering [legal] decisions in [Eliezer's] presence. [Eliezer] said to his wife, Imma Shalom: "He will no longer live after the end of the Sabbath." And when he died after the Sabbath, sages entered and said to [Eliezer]: "Rabbi, you are a prophet!" He said to them: "I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet. However, thus I received from my teachers, that anyone who renders legal decisions in the presence of his teacher deserves death."

Eliezer corrects the sages' misunderstanding of how he knew that the student would die. His knowledge came from Rabbinic lore, not through prophetic abilities. The story thus proposes that Rabbinic knowledge is tantamount to, or perhaps more powerful than, prophetic insight.<sup>9</sup> The rhetoric is epideictic, strengthening respect for Rabbinic masters and their teachings.

*Sifre Deuteronomy 43 (Corrective Setting)*

And one time Rabban Gamaliel, R. Joshua, R. Eleazar b. Azariah and R. Aqiba entered Rome. They heard a din from Petilon, 120 miles away. They began crying, but R. Aqiba laughed. They said to him: "Aqiba, why are we crying, but you are laughing?" [Aqiba] said to them: "And you, why are you crying?" They said to him: "Should we not cry? For the gentile idolaters, who offer sacrifices to [false] gods and prostrate themselves before idols, sit in peace and ease. But the House that was the footstool of our God is burned with fire and has become a dwelling place for beasts of the field." [Aqiba] said to them: "It is even for that reason that I laugh. If [God] acted thus towards those who anger him, [giving the idolaters in Petilon peace and ease], how much the more [will He act in this way] towards those who do His will, [so that Israel eventually will also dwell in peace]."

9. This claim sharply contrasts with that of Hillel, *Tosefta, Pisha* 4:13F, cited above. He defends himself by claiming that, like prophets and subject to the holy spirit, the people will automatically know the correct law. As I noted above, the perspective assigned to Hillel is not common within the Rabbinic literature.

In a short dialogue, Gamaliel, Joshua, and Eleazar b. Azariah object to Aqiba's laughing at the sound of people engaged in idol worship. Aqiba defends his actions, explaining why it is appropriate to laugh. The story's rhetoric is epideictic, strengthening belief in a positive, continuing relationship between the people of Israel and God.<sup>10</sup>

### B. *Defense of Others*

#### Mekhilta Ishmael Vayassa 1 (Corrective Setting)

Again it happened that a student went [before the ark to lead the service] in the presence of R. Eliezer, and [the student] lengthened his prayers. [Eliezer]'s students said to him: "Our Rabbi, you saw that so-and-so lengthened his prayers." . . . [Eliezer] said to them: "He did not lengthen [them] more than Moses, for it is said: *So I fell down before the Lord forty days* . . . (Deut 9:25)." For R. Eliezer used to say: "There is a time to shorten [one's prayers] and a time to lengthen [them]."

The students object to the actions of a third party, the one who lengthened his prayers. Eliezer, the primary character, defends that other person and, in the final statement, corrects the students' understanding of the law.

## V. PRAISE STORIES

These stories appear in three basic types, 1) self-praise, in which the individual who states the final utterance praises himself, 2) commendations, in which the praise is of someone else, and 3) laudations, in which an individual extrinsic to the action of the story praises the story's main actor. While the second and third types are found in the Rabbinic literature, self-praise stories do not appear. This is in keeping with the absence in this literature of autobiographical comments in general.

### A. *Commendation*

#### Sifre Numbers 75 (Corrective Setting)

[*And the sons of Aaron*], *the priests*, [*shall blow the trumpets*] (Num 10:3). "Whether blemished or unblemished"—the words of R. Tarfon. R. Aqiba says, "*Priests* is said here, and *priests* is said elsewhere (Lev 1:11). Just as *priests* which is said elsewhere [refers to] unblemished [priests] and not to blemished [ones], also here [*priests* refers to] unblemished [priests] and not to blemished [ones]." R. Tarfon said to him: "How long will you rake

10. Robbins (1985, p. 24) classifies this story as a "defense of others." He thus understands Aqiba to defend the gentiles in Petilon. The story is clear, however, that the other rabbis object to Aqiba's own action ("why are we crying, but you are laughing?"), leading Aqiba to defend himself (" . . . for that reason . . . I laugh").

[words] together and bring them against us, Aqiba?" He was unable to bear up. "I swear by the life of my children that I saw Simon, my mother's brother, who girded his feet [for he was a cripple], standing and blowing the trumpets." [Aqiba] said to him: "Yes, [but] perhaps [he did this only] on Rosh Hashshana, Yom Kippur or in the Jubilee year?" [Tarfon] said to him: "You are not refuted. Happy are you, Abraham, our father, for Aqiba has come out of your loins. Tarfon saw and forgot, [but] Aqiba explained [it] on his own and made [it] agree with the law. Behold, anyone who separates himself from you, [Aqiba], it is as if he separated himself from his own life."

Tarfon praises the story's primary character, Aqiba, for his prowess in matters of law. In light of the underlying legal dispute, the setting is corrective.

*Tosefta Nedarim 5:15 (Corrective Setting)*

It happened to Hananyah b. Hananyah that his father dedicated him to be a Nazirite. [The father] brought him before Rabban Gamaliel, [and] Rabban Gamaliel examined him to see if he were of age. [Hananyah] said to him: "Why are you worried? [Are you worried that] I am [already of age and therefore not] under my father's authority? [If] I am under my father's authority, behold, I am a Nazirite [as a result of his dedication]. [But] if I am under my own authority, behold, I [dedicate myself and still] am a Nazirite from this moment [forward]." [Gamaliel] stood and kissed him on the head. He said: "I am certain that you will be an authoritative teacher in Israel before you die." And he did become a teacher in Israel before his death.

Gamaliel, a secondary character, praises Hananyah b. Hananyah, the primary character, for his willingness to fulfill his father's wish. The final sentence is tacked on and not part of the expected pronouncement story form which would have the pericope end with Gamaliel's praise.

## B. *Laudation*

*Mekhilta Ishmael Pisha 16 (Corrective Setting)*

One time the students spent the Sabbath in Yabneh, but R. Joshua did not spend the Sabbath there. When his students came to him, he said to them: "What new thing did you [learn] in Yabneh?" They said to him: "After you, Rabbi." He said to them: "Who spent the Sabbath there?" They said to him: "R. Eleazar b. Azariah." He said to them: "Is it possible that R. Eleazar b. Azariah spent the Sabbath there, and you did not [learn] anything new!" They said to him: "[He stated] this general statement [when] he explained (Deut 29:9–10): *You are standing today all of you . . . your little ones and your wives*. Now did a little one actually know [enough] to understand [the difference] between good and evil? Rather, [they were mentioned in the verse] to give a reward for those who brought them [and] to increase the reward for those who do His will to establish what is said, *The Lord was pleased for his*

*righteousness' sake* (Isa 42:21). [Joshua] said to them: "This is a new teaching and more than that, [for] behold, I was like a person seventy years old, but I was not worthy [to understand] this thing until today. Happy are you, Abraham, our father, for Eleazar b. Azariah came out of your loins. The generation is not an orphan generation, for Eleazar b. Azariah dwells in it."

This is a laudation because the one being praised, Eleazar b. Azariah, is not directly confronted by the one praising him, Joshua. The praise concerns Eleazar's insightful exegesis of Scripture. The setting is corrective, for the students had not realized the importance of Eleazar's teaching.

Sifre Numbers 13:1 (Corrective Setting)

One time Sabta of Ulan hired his donkey to a gentile woman. When she reached the edge of the territory, she said to him: "Wait until I enter the temple of the territory's idol." When she came out, he said to her: "Wait for me until I enter and do as you have done." She said to him: "Is it possible that you, a Jew, [will enter and serve the idol]!?" He entered, [uncovered himself], and wiped himself on the nose of Peor. Then all the gentiles laughed and said: "No man has served [Peor] like this before!"

Sabta's actions are praised by a secondary group, whose laudation comes at the end of the story. The author's use of irony in placing this praise in the mouths of gentiles highlights the story's polemical intent (hence its corrective setting). By commending Sabta, the gentiles themselves admit to the irrational character of idol-worship. This enhances the epideictic force of the story, which strengthens belief in Israelite religion.

Tosefta Hagiga 2:1 (Corrective Setting)

One time R. Yohanan b. Zakkai was riding on his donkey, and Eleazar b. Arak was close behind him. [Eleazar] said to him: "Rabbi, teach me one section of the Maaseh Merkavah." [Yohanan] said to him: "No! Thus I have said to you previously, that they do not teach about the Merkavah to an individual unless he is a sage who understands his own knowledge." [Eleazar] said to him: "Now I wish to discuss with you." [Yohanan] said to him: "Speak." R. Eleazar b. Arak opened [his discourse] and expounded the Maaseh Merkavah. R. Yohanan b. Zakkai got down from his donkey and wrapped himself in his prayer shawl, and both of them sat on a stone under an olive tree, and he discussed before him. [Yohanan] stood and kissed him on his head and said: "Blessed is the Lord, the God of Israel, who gave a son to Abraham, our father, who knows [how] to understand to explain the glory of our Father in heaven. There are those who expound well but do not live well. But Eleazar b. Arak expounds well and lives well. Happy are you, Abraham our father, for Eleazar b. Arak, who knows [how] to understand to explain the glory of our Father in heaven, came out of your loins."

This story is placed in the category of laudations, not commendations, because Yohanan b. Zakkai in fact is lauding God for having given to Abraham a son such as Eleazar b. Arak. The narrative tension in this story is increased by the initial corrective setting, in which Yohanan scolds Eleazar for his presumed wrong belief that he is fit to be taught esoteric knowledge.

*Tosefta Kelim Baba Batra 1:2–3 (Corrective Setting)*

One time a certain woman who had woven a garment in cultic cleanness came before R. Ishmael for [him] to examine her [concerning whether or not the garment indeed was to be deemed clean]. She said to him: "Rabbi, I know that the garment was not rendered unclean; however, it was not in my heart to guard it [from uncleanness]." As a result of the examination of her which R. Ishmael conducted, she said to him: "Rabbi, I know that a menstruating woman entered and pulled the cord [so that she conveyed uncleanness to the garment by her shaking the web] with me." Said R. Ishmael: "How great are the words of sages, for they used to say: "If one did not intend to guard it [in cleanness], it is unclean."

This again is a laudation, for the situation depicted in the beginning of the story leads to Yohanan's praising of a third party, the sages, who are not directly involved at all.

*Tosefta Berakhot 3:20 (Action Setting)*

They said about R. Haninah b. Dosa that he was praying when a lizard bit him. Even so, he did not stop praying. His students went and found it dead. They said: "Woe to the man whom a lizard bites; woe to the lizard that bites Ben Dosa."

An unidentified "they" both describes the setting and delivers the praise of the story's main character, Haninah b. Dosa. Haninah is commended for his fervor and concentration during prayer.

## VI. CENSURE STORIES

All but one of the Rabbinic examples of this type are direct-censures, in which one participant in the story censures another.

### A. *Direct Censures*

*Mishnah Avot 2:6 (Declarative Setting)*

Also [Hillel] saw a skull floating on the face of the water. He said to it: "Because you drowned [others], they drowned you. And in the end, they that drowned you shall be drowned."

Hillel responds to the situation described in the first line of this pronouncement story. As is normally the case in a declarative setting, the



rhetoric is deliberative, concerned with actions that will take place in the future, but not sarcastic or malicious. Hillel's response simply shows off the sage's perceptive understanding of human nature. While the internal rhetoric is deliberative, the story is used in context epideictically, to reinforce our belief that Hillel is to be praised and honored.

Sifra 58b–c (Corrective Setting)

A certain student said before R. Aqiba: "I must say what I have learned: [When a woman at childbirth bears a male] *she shall be unclean seven days . . . And on the eighth day [the flesh of his foreskin] shall be circumcised* (Lev 12:2–3). One might think [that he should be circumcised] fifteen days [after his birth, that is] the eighth [day] after [her] seven days [of uncleanness. However] Scripture says, *on that day*, [which proves that circumcision is on the eighth day after birth]." R. Aqiba said to him: "You sink in mighty waters and bring up clay in your hands. For is it not already said: *And a son eight days old you shall circumcise, all the males forever* (Gen 17:12)?"

While consisting primarily of a legal debate, this is a pronouncement story because of its (albeit undeveloped) historical setting (viz.: [Once] a certain student said. . .) and the inclusion of Aqiba's censure ("You sink in deep waters . . ."). The rhetoric is deliberative, indicating when a child should be circumcised. The larger point, however, is made through the use of a corrective setting. This point is that overly clever exegesis has no value. Scripture tends clearly to state its points.

Mishnah *Berakhot* 1:3 (Corrective Setting)

R. Tarfon said: "I was going on the road and I reclined to recite the [evening] *Shema* according to the words of the House of Shammai, and [in doing so] I placed myself in danger from robbers." They said to him: "You deserved to lose your life, for you transgressed the words of the House of Hillel."

A secondary party, referred to simply as "they," rebuffs Tarfon for endangering his life by following an erroneous teaching. This is a censure story, not a legal defense, because Tarfon, who is clearly the main character, is left speechless and does not defend his position at all.

## B. Defamation

Sifra 94a (Declarative Setting)

One time an ulcer formed on the leg of Joseph b. Pakas, and he asked the doctor to operate. He said to him: "Let me know when [you] finish the operations and [the leg] remains [hanging] as if by a hair." The doctor [finished the operation and] left [the leg hanging] as if by a hair, and he made this known to him. [Joseph] called to his son, Nahunyah. He said to

him: "Hunyah, my son, until now you have been obligated to care for me. From now on, go away, for one does not defile [himself] by the limb of a living person, even his father's." And when the matter came before the sages, they said that it was said [concerning him]: "*There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness* (Lam 7:15), [which means], the righteous one is lost, and his righteousness [is lost] with him."

The primary character is Joseph b. Pakas, whose leg is operated on. Sages, a third party, have the final word, censuring him for being overzealous concerning matters of defilement. The point of this censure story thus is that "one can be, so to speak, too righteous" (Porton, 1981, p. 93). Making this point about proper action, the rhetoric here is deliberative, indicated by the declarative setting.

### THE CORPUS AS A WHOLE

The following synopsis indicates the overall distribution of the Rabbinic stories within Robbins' taxonomy. In viewing this synopsis, we recall that the six major categories represent "an essentially cumulative sphere of display in pronouncement stories" (Robbins, 1985, p. 4). The later categories, that is, take up and expand upon the features of the preceding categories. This being the case, we must focus not only upon the particular categories in which Rabbinic materials are found, but also must emphasize the area in the list in which those stories are concentrated. The top of the list contains stories primarily concerned with display of individual character or personality. In the later categories, where the majority of Rabbinic material is located, the interest in character is shadowed by other issues.

### SYNOPSIS: THE EARLY RABBINIC PRONOUNCEMENT STORIES

(\* = Legal or exegetical materials)

#### I. DISPLAY STORIES: 0%

#### II. THESIS STORIES: 20.8%

- |                         |                              |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| A. Deliberative Thesis: | Sifre Deuteronomy 322*       |
| B. Juridical Thesis:    | Sifre Deuteronomy 80*        |
|                         | Mishnah <i>Berakhot</i> 1:1* |
| C. Epideictic Thesis:   | Tosefta <i>Shevuot</i> 3:6   |
|                         | Sifre Deuteronomy 13         |

## III. EXHORTATION STORIES: 0%

## IV. DEFENSE STORIES: 33.3%

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| A. Juridical Defense: | Sifre Deuteronomy 38*<br>Tosefta <i>Pisha</i> 4:13*  |
| B. Epideictic Defense |  |
| 1. Self-Defense:      | Mishnah <i>Berakhot</i> 2:5*<br>Mishnah <i>Berakhot</i> 2:6*<br>Mishnah <i>Berakhot</i> 2:7*<br>Sifra 45c*<br>Sifre Deuteronomy 43 |
| 2. Defense of Others: | Mekhilta Ishmael Vayassa I*  |

## V. PRAISE STORIES: 29.2%

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| A. Commendation: | Sifre Numbers 75*<br>Tosefta <i>Nedarim</i> 5:15  |
| B. Laudation:    | Mekhilta Ishmael <i>Pisha</i> 16<br>Sifre Numbers 13:1<br>Tosefta <i>Hagiga</i> 2:1<br>Tosefta <i>Kelim Baba Batra</i> 1:2–3*<br>Tosefta <i>Berakhot</i> 3:20 |

## VI. CENSURE STORIES: 16.7 %

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| A. Direct Censure: | Mishnah <i>Avot</i> 2:6<br>Sifra 58b–c*<br>Mishnah <i>Berakhot</i> 1:3* |
| B. Defamation:     | Sifra 94a   |

The Rabbinic corpus is concentrated in categories IV through VI, which account for 79.2% of the total. Defense stories, the largest single category, comprise 33.3% of the whole. Praise and censure stories—closely related headings—together account for 45.9%. By contrast, within the first three categories, representing stories that serve primarily to advance a theoretical statement about belief, action, or character, only category II, thesis stories, has any entries at all, comprising 20.8% of the corpus. In the Gospels and other Hellenistic literatures, these pericopae concentrate upon belief and personality. Yet three of the five entries in category II concern legal and exegetical issues, not personality. Even

here, then, the focus of the Rabbinic materials is complex and developed, as in the stories found in categories IV through VI.<sup>11</sup>

The distribution of pronouncement stories within Robbins' categories confirms an assessment of the interests and concerns of early Rabbinic Judaism derived from a purely substantive evaluation. The synoptic table shows that this literature has minimal interest in aspects of personality *per se* or in correct human behavior, viewed, for instance, from the perspectives of ethics, heroism, or patriotism. It focuses, rather, upon questions of religious law (the concern of fourteen of the twenty four stories listed here) and correct behavior under the law (in sixteen of these stories the setting is corrective). The Rabbinic literature presents a historical setting or highlights the personality of a rabbi, thus forming a pronouncement story, only to the extent that, in specific cases, these matters shed light upon the creation and implementation of the legal system.

This larger concern explains the concentration of pericopae in category IV, defense stories. Here individual masters indicate why an action is appropriate in a specific setting. In the same way, the praise and censure stories focus only upon a narrow aspect of personality and intellect: the ability correctly to understand and apply the law. The first three categories, by contrast, do not provide fruitful contexts for discussion of points of tension within a legal system. The rabbis, this is to say, do not engage in display (category I) outside of the context of a legal or exegetical debate. They do not exhort ideas in the personal manner suggested by category III. This leaves only the pericopae in category II, which, as I have indicated, offer as a thesis a statement of law, not a dictum concerning good or bad in general.

We see from the preceding that, by focusing upon the rhetoric of the Rabbinic pericopae, Robbins' revised system of classification allows us accurately to describe the distinctive interests and concerns of this literature as a whole. Accordingly, it is superior to the initial taxonomy used to characterize the Rabbinic corpus, which only highlighted the substantive divergence of the Rabbinic pronouncement stories from their Hellenistic formal parallels (see Avery-Peck, 1983, *passim*). Evaluation of these pericopae within the new taxonomy, by contrast, shows the extent to which early Rabbinic Judaism comprised a social system concerned with one specific trait of personality, the ability to manipulate and implement what the rabbis believed to be revealed law.

11. The general focus of the Rabbinic corpus is illustrated as well by the fact that the setting in sixteen of the twenty four pericopae is corrective. As I note below, this is in keeping with the overall attention of the Rabbinic literature to disputes concerning issues of law and exegesis.

A specific example of how this rhetorical evaluation heightens appreciation for the social character of early Rabbinic Judaism is in order. The presence here of a high percentage of praise stories (unit V, comprising 29.2% of the corpus) and defense stories (unit IV, 33.3%) in contrast to relatively few censure stories (unit VI, comprising only 16.7% of the corpus) is instructive of the social and intellectual traits of early Rabbinic Judaism. The Rabbinic literature as a whole is built largely of disputes, which propose that each party has an arguable position. In light of the general prevalence of disputes, both defense stories—which are disputes placed in a particular setting—and praise stories—which tend here to comprise disputes that conclude with a commendation—occur as a large proportion of the pronouncement story corpus.

The hallmark of the defense and praise forms is their underlying claim that each party's legal position is worthy of serious consideration. This form implies a mutual respect for each individual involved—even though, in the end, one party wins and the other loses. The censure form, by contrast, does not permit an individual accused of incorrect behavior or thought to defend himself at all. It proposes that the accused's actions are not justifiable or that, even if they are, the group does not care to hear the individual's explanation. The Rabbinic literature's preference for the defense and praise forms accordingly illuminates the social character of the early Rabbinism that produced this literature. By affording respect to each rabbi and his legal dicta, these forms forged strong intellectual and collegial ties within the group, thereby assuring that the small and initially powerless Rabbinic movement could maintain its tight internal structure so as to survive and grow. Criticism, while common, was defused within open debates that strengthened, rather than shattered, feelings of mutuality and of shared authority and responsibility.<sup>12</sup> By contrast, prominent use of the censure form, with its implied lack of mutuality, would have been destructive to group unity. The form accordingly does not regularly appear.<sup>13</sup>

12. These same facts explain the absence of exhortation stories in the Rabbinic corpus. In those stories, the validity of the thesis depends upon the character and personality of the individual who states it. But the Rabbinic literature generally refuses to legitimate action and thought solely on the basis of individual personality. Each member of the group, rather, has an equal opportunity to substantiate his view through reasoned exegesis.

13. In fact only one of the extant censure stories actually concerns an incorrect understanding of the law (Mishnah *Berakhot* 1:3, in which Tarfon is told he deserved to die for following the Shammaite position). Mishnah *Avot* 2:6, by contrast, does not contain a censure of a Rabbinic authority at all. Sifra 58b–c comprises an exegetical debate over a student's ambitious Scriptural exegesis. At Sifra 94a, the criticism is for the individual's being too righteous, a rather mild condemnation.

## CONCLUSION

Use of Robbins' revised classificatory scheme instructs us not only concerning the varied rhetorical functions of the pronouncement story but also directs our attention to the salient characteristics of the Rabbinic examples and of the early Rabbinic literature as a whole. The taxonomy, that is, permits identification of important attitudes within the early Rabbinic movement and allows isolation of the social and philosophical ideologies of the individuals who created the Rabbinic literature. Unlike a previous classification of the early Rabbinic pronouncement stories, this assessment of that literature therefore achieves positive results. It illustrates the value of rhetorical criticism in general, showing how rhetorical form and content determine meaning and clarifying the degree to which rhetorical forms have a comparable significance across diverse literatures. Significantly, in the case at hand, rhetorical evaluation of a small portion of a literature substantiates an understanding gained through evaluation of the content and interests of the corpus as a whole.<sup>14</sup>

In the end, we must make explicit the distinguishing feature that explains why, unlike the two previous studies, this examination of the Rabbinic pronouncement corpus achieves positive results. The pivotal fact is that the previous studies were designed to test the assumption that the Rabbinic materials closely proximate both the form and content of pronouncement stories found in other literatures. Porton's study of these pericopae examined—and disproved—the claim that New Testament authors took over rhetorical forms found in the Rabbinic corpus. In the same way, my previous classification of the Rabbinic pronouncement corpus searched for, but failed to find, significant *substantive* parallels between the Rabbinic materials and formally similar Hellenistic ones.

The previous studies reached negative results because their foundational questions derived from what we now see to be unsupportable assumptions regarding the relationships among the Hellenistic, New Testament, and Rabbinic literatures. The present study contrasts to those previous assessments in that it rejects the notion of a single origin, function, or use of the pronouncement story form. Rather, it employs a taxonomy designed from the start to describe how pronouncement stories function in the distinctive contexts in which they appear. It accomplishes this by

14. This study's conclusions regarding the early Rabbinic movement's disinterest in the personality of individual masters parallels conclusions reached by Green (1978) on the basis of formal and substantive analysis of the Rabbinic corpus as a whole.

isolating and examining both the primary and secondary rhetorical features of the Rabbinic pericopae, so as to evaluate rhetorical content apart from substantive and topical concerns. This approach accordingly permits the Rabbinic pericopae both to speak as pronouncement stories and to maintain their meaning as integral parts of the Rabbinic literature from which they derive. This ability to highlight both the shared features and the distinctive traits of the literatures subject to evaluation comprises, of course, the central value of rhetorical analysis.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Avery-Peck, A. "Classifying Early Rabbinic Pronouncement Stories." *SBL Seminar Papers* 22, pp. 223–44. Chico.
- Bultmann, R. 1968. *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*. New York.
- Green, W. S. 1978. "What's in a Name? The Problem of Rabbinic 'Biography.'" *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice*, pp. 77–96. Ed. W. S. Green. Missoula.
- Kennedy, G. A. 1984. *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*. Chapel Hill.
- Neusner, J. 1970. *Development of a Legend: A Life of Yohanan ben Zak-kai*. Leiden.
- Neusner, J. and Avery-Peck, A. 1982a. "The Quest for the Historical Hillel." *Judaica*, December, pp. 194–214 (in German) and *Formative Judaism: Religious, Historical and Literary Studies*, pp. 45–63. Ed. Jacob Neusner. Chico.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1982b. "Literature and Society: The Unfolding Conventions on Hillel." *Formative Judaism: Religious, Historical and Literary Studies*, pp. 87–98. Ed. Jacob Neusner. Chico.
- Porton, G. 1981. "The Pronouncement Story in Tannaitic Literature: A Review of Bultmann's Theory." *Semeia* 20 pp. 81–99. Ed. Robert Tannehill. Chico.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1976–1982. *The Traditions of Rabbi Ishmael*, 4 vols. Leiden.
- Robbins, V. 1981. "Classifying Pronouncement Stories in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*." *Semeia* 20, pp. 29–52. Ed. Robert Tannehill. Chico.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1983 "Guidelines for Further Research." Typescript of paper presented to the Pronouncement Story Consultation of the Society of Biblical Literature.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1985. "A Rhetorical Typology for Classifying and Analyzing Pronouncement Stories." Typescript.
- Tannehill, R. 1981. "The Pronouncement Story and its Types." *Semeia* 20, pp. 1–13. Ed. Robert Tannehill. Chico.